

TAX TIME AT CITY HALL

Don't forget there may be significant delays in accessing the streets around City Hall due to Canada Line construction.

Why not take advantage of your other payment options, and our new online account balance information feature? If you do visit City Hall during tax season, come in as early as possible before the due date and be sure to allow for extra driving or travel time.

Find out more about your options on the back of your tax notice or at vancouver.ca/propertytax.

CITYNEWS

FROM THE CITY OF VANCOUVER • MAY 2007

EcoDensity

SUSTAINABLE LIVING CAPTURES VANCOUVER'S IMAGINATION

YOU DON'T HAVE to go far these days before someone mentions EcoDensity. Whether it's in your community, in the media, or among building and planning professionals, there's a lot of interest in the City's EcoDensity initiative.

While Vancouver is proud to be known as one of the world's most livable cities, the very livability of which we are so proud is threatened because our lifestyle is not sustainable. The city has a large ecological footprint, and the fact is that if everyone lived like we do in Vancouver, it would take four planets to sustain us.

Today, Vancouver faces three important challenges:

- how to continue to grow in a way that is sustainable and reduces the city's ecological footprint;
- how to grow in a way that maintains our livability; and
- how to grow in a way that improves opportunities to create more affordable types of housing.

The EcoDensity initiative tackles these challenges by recognizing that well-designed density can accommodate this growth.

EcoDensity's goal is to build more communities in Vancouver that are green while also promoting livability and affordability.

With only 11 per cent of Vancouver's land occupied by multiple-unit residences such as duplexes and condos, and almost half of Vancouver's land area occupied by single-family residences, there are many opportunities in all neighbourhoods to accommodate more people in buildings that are sustainably designed and constructed, and are within easy reach of public transit, libraries, child care, community centres, green space and retail services.

When Council makes decisions later this fall on which EcoDensity ideas will be prioritized, feedback from the public will play a key role. Nearly 1,000 people came out to discuss EcoDensity and provide ideas during the EcoDensity Fair in early March. Others are filling out surveys on the EcoDensity website. Townhall meetings are planned for the spring and a Choices Forum is scheduled for June with Council. Speakers including architect Avi Friedman, ecological footprint creator Bill Rees and economist John Helliwell have further added to the EcoDensity conversation.

For more information and to get involved:

vancouver.ca/ecodensity

WATER-WISE INSIDE AND OUT

Are you throwing money down the drain or drowning your garden? Help save water, energy and money by getting the Indoor or Outdoor Water Saver Kits, which the City of Vancouver is offering at the special price of \$12 each for Vancouver residents only.

The Indoor Water Saver Kit is especially suited for older homes, and can help retrofit your kitchen and bathroom to use 15 to 20 per cent less water, and save up to 10 to 15 per cent on your water heating bill. The kit includes: a low-flow shower head, two bathroom aerators, a kitchen aerator, a toilet displacement bag, and two leak detection tablets. The shower head and aerators help provide good water flow using less water. The toilet tank bags save up to three litres of water

per flush while the dye tablets test for water leaking from toilet tank to bowl. The Outdoor Water Saver Kit includes: a heavy-duty water nozzle, mechanical water timer, six hose washers, and two rain gauges. The timer and trigger nozzle hose gun will help you avoid forgetting to shut off a sprinkler or leaving the hose running by mistake. The washers prevent hose leaks, and the rain gauges will help you monitor how much water your lawn really needs. Using the kit could save up to 21 cubic metres of water per year or about 90 bathtubs full!

Kits are available in the Client Service Centre at City Hall, 453 West 12th Avenue. Price: \$12 each (retail value is approximately \$30). Limit: 2 kits per household. Information: 604.871.6144



BALANCING THE BUDGET BY BALANCING NEEDS

DEVELOPING THE CITY'S operating budget requires careful choices. In addition to meeting its requirement for a balanced budget, Council is faced with the challenge of finding room for new and expanded services demanded by the public in areas such as environmental protection, social and cultural initiatives, and public safety. Council also has to consider the impacts of these additions on property tax increases for residential and non-residential properties to ensure the budget is sustainable for years to come.

This year's operating budget has increased due to inflationary pressures on our ongoing programs and services, the cost of new and expanded programs approved by Council in 2006, costs for services provided by outside agencies such as E-Comm, which are passed through the City budget, and increased costs related to the City's capital program. In addition, in 2007 Council approved funding for an additional 17 police officers, and a number of programs including the Homelessness Action Plan, the Youth Politik Program and future area planning initiatives.

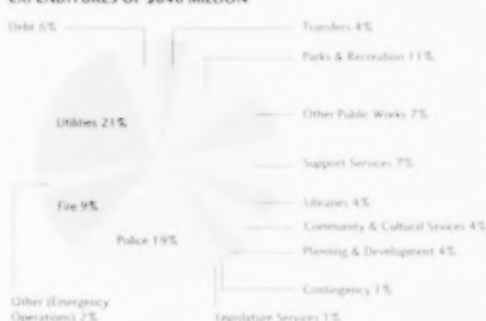
Even with these increases, Council balanced the operating budget without cuts to the services that are highly valued by Vancouverites such as park and library services. A combination of new and increased revenues and internal efficiencies were used to maintain services you tell us you most appreciate such as greenway development and traffic calming, arts and culture initiatives, and maintenance of the transportation network, minimizing the required increase in the property tax levy.

To reach a balanced operating budget, Council chose to increase the property tax levy by 3.98 per cent. City services accounted for about 3.5 per cent of this increase, with the remainder coming from outside agencies over which the City has no control (e.g. increases in energy and regional sewer system costs). Before making its decision on the budget, Council engaged in extensive public consultations from November 2006 through February 2007. This included public meetings throughout the city, an educational supplement in community newspapers, electronic and paper surveys, and randomly selected telephone polling. More surveys were returned this year than ever before.

2007 OPERATING BUDGET – REVENUES OF \$848 MILLION



2007 OPERATING BUDGET EXPENDITURES OF \$848 MILLION



In addition to municipal property taxes, your residential property tax bill may also include user fees to cover costs for solid waste, sanitary sewer and water services. For non-residential taxpayers these costs are billed separately by the City or by private service providers.

The City is not the only authority that taxes the value of your property. For administrative efficiency purposes, the City's tax bill also includes charges from the provincial government for school purposes, BC Assessment Authority, Municipal Finance Authority, the Greater Vancouver Regional District and TransLink. These taxes are billed and collected by the City on behalf of those organizations but are not the responsibility of your municipal government.

ONLINE HOME OWNER GRANT

This year the City has added a new way to claim your Home Owner Grant online. It's simple – all you need is a computer with internet access and your folio number and access code found on your tax notice. Go to the City's website and follow the easy step-by-step instructions to determine your eligibility and claim your grant. You get immediate confirmation that your grant claim has been received. You can also link to your online banking site to pre-arrange payment of your taxes. Don't miss this opportunity to save time, money and worry that your taxes are paid in full and on time. Find out more about this option at vancouver.ca/hog.

You can also still use Canada Post's electronic mail service, epost™ to receive your tax notice online as well. Visit www.epost.ca.

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UPDATE ON 2010 WINTER GAMES PREPARATIONS

It's now less than three years before Vancouver welcomes athletes, visitors and media from around the world.

Renovations of the various venues that will be used for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games have started, and construction of new facilities like the Hillcrest Curling venue and the Olympic Village is also well under way.

While the construction proceeds, the City is now turning its attention to the hundreds of other preparations and plans that need to be completed. Among the many activities the City is involved in with the Vancouver Organizing Committee and other partners are: planning for transportation changes, way-finding and signage, security, arts and culture, visitors services, communication and engagement of citizens and businesses, identifying locations for corporate sponsors, sports federations, and Olympic associations from competing countries, and liaising with broadcasters.

Meanwhile, the City continues to work with its partners to secure longer term legacies. Besides the improved facilities the City will have, we recently contributed to a \$6.5 million partnership that will support creative development projects in the arts and culture sector, and we have also funded programs to encourage more active communities.

Photo: Hillcrest Curling Venue Groundbreaking on February 23

Back: David Emerson, Minister for the Vancouver Winter Olympics; Park Board Chair Ian Robertson

Front: Mayor Sam Sullivan and curler Daryl Neugebauer





SEEKING FAIRNESS IN THE PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM

The cost of municipal services is distributed to seven property classes in the city. Residential properties pay about 45 per cent of these costs while non-residential properties pay about 55 per cent. To ensure that the distribution reflects fairness in the tax system, Council appointed the Property Tax Policy Review Commission (see right) to recommend a long-term distribution policy. The Commission is expected to report back in June 2007.

On April 19, City Council considered an interim recommendation from the Commission that the distribution be changed by allocating additional tax burden to the residential classes. Council decided to allocate the entire property tax levy increase to the residential classes, effectively freezing the non-residential tax levies at the 2006 level. The Commission indicated that a shift of this magnitude would not be inconsistent with its final recommendations. Approximately 2 per cent of the property tax levy will be shifted from non-residential to residential properties. For the average residential property valued at \$696,000 this will mean a municipal tax bill of \$1,685, approximately 8 per cent over the 2006 level. A similarly valued business property will see its property taxes held close to 2006 levels. For individual properties, the impact of market value changes and land assessment averaging may result in impacts different than this average property.

COMMISSION REVIEWS TAX DISTRIBUTION

City Council established the Property Tax Policy Review Commission in September 2006 to make recommendations by June 2007 on:

- How much of the total property taxes collected by the City of Vancouver should be paid by residential properties, and how much by non-residential properties?
- What strategies can be implemented to address issues relating to the year-to-year stability and predictability of property taxes for individual properties in Vancouver?

The Commission is made up of Dr. Stanley W. Hamilton (the Philip H. White Eminent Professor of Real Estate, Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia), Mr. Peter Adams (an independent consultant based in Victoria and former Director of the Tax and Policy Branch of the BC Ministry of Finance), and Dr. Enid Slack (Director of the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance at the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto).

A series of open houses were held in February 2007 to solicit feedback from businesses, residents and stakeholders.

For more information:
vancouver.ca/taxcommission

WHERE YOUR TAXES GO

With the tax levies of all taxing authorities included, the average property will have an overall increase in taxes and utility fees of \$170 (5%) compared to 2006. These charges, calculated to include the provincial Home Owner Grant, are summarized in the following table:

AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY		\$696,000.00
Levy 2007		
General taxes		1,684.63
Sewer fee		171.00
Solid waste fee		159.00
Water rates		349.00
TOTAL CITY CHARGES		2,363.63
Provincial schools - gross		1,347.08
Homeowner grant - basic		(570.00)
NET SCHOOL TAXES		777.08
BC Assessment		54.66
Municipal finance		0.24
Regional district		59.64
TransLink		297.67
TOTAL OTHER TAX LEVIES		1,189.29
TOTAL TAXES - net		2,873.93
TOTAL TAXES & UTILITIES		3,552.93

GET A LICENCE, REX!

City of Vancouver Animal Shelter staff will be setting up agility equipment at local parks throughout the spring and summer. Trainers will be available to assist dog owners running their pooches through the agility course.

At the same time, owners will be able to purchase a dog licence. Licenses help return lost dogs to their owners, and having an up-to-date dog licence may drastically increase a pet's chances of surviving the aftermath of a disaster. As part of the City's emergency preparedness program, Animal Control Services will be offering a disaster registration service for licensed pets.

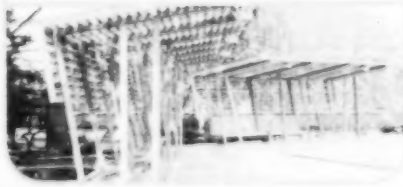
Check vancouveranimalshelter.ca, visit the Shelter, 1280 Raymur Avenue or drop by City Hall to purchase a dog licence or to get information about disaster preparedness for pets. You might also like to pick up a copy of *Training Rex in the City* (\$5 + GST), an easy-to-use guide to teaching your dog basic obedience.



REDISCOVER QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK

Queen Elizabeth Park is now home to a new plaza that officially opened on April 12. The area had been closed for three years during the completion of seismic upgrading of city reservoirs. The plaza reconstruction cost \$6 million and encompasses a 1.2-hectare area. Highlights include seven covered tai chi arbours, the 93 square-metre Celebration Pavilion and a dancing fountain which re-circulates 85,000 litres of water through 70 jets. Henry Moore's imposing sculpture *Knife Edge - Two Piece*, a gift to the Park Board from Prentice Bloedel in 1969, has been elevated to a more prominent position adjacent to the fountain.

The stylish and elegant new Celebration Pavilion is now available for weddings, civil unions and other special event bookings. Booking information is available at vancouverparks.ca. As well, the Park Board's free Dance at Dusk series will be held at the new plaza this summer.



POSTER PROPERLY

Before you head out with a stack of posters and tape or glue, think before you post. Don't put up your posters on just any surface.

Remember, the City of Vancouver has a bylaw which prohibits putting posters on any street pole or street furniture. However, you can put up posters on any one of the more than 200 poster cylinders located on poles around the city.

For a full list of locations see: vancouver.ca/engsvcs/streets/admin/pdf/PosterCylinders.pdf

Anyone found to be placing posters illegally will be subject to impound fees for the removal of the posters. Illegal posters are an eyesore, damage the poles and street furniture, and can cost the City more than \$500,000 each year to remove. Help keep Vancouver's streets clean.

If you see illegally placed posters, please contact our Sanitation Department: 604.326.4710 or sanitation.ops@vancouver.ca



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

A STREETCAR LINE connecting Granville Island, the Canada Line, the Vancouver Olympic Village, and Science World is one step closer to reality after City Council recently approved a further detailed design study.

The Downtown Streetcar would be an important element of a sustainable transportation system that will support Granville Island, the Vancouver Olympic Village and the larger Southeast False Creek neighbourhood. It would be part of the Vancouver Transit Strategy's goal to create an improved overall regional transit network.

The Downtown Streetcar would be fully accessible and provide a level of service and capacity in between a local bus and a regional form of rail transit like SkyTrain. Modern streetcars have been successfully running in cities such as Portland, Oregon and Melbourne, Australia, providing a quiet, safe, and comfortable mode of transit with more interior space and larger open windows than buses, while producing no exhaust fumes.

An expanded rail infrastructure would also support Vancouver's EcoDensity initiative, which is a strategy to encourage high-quality densification to make Vancouver greener, more livable and more affordable. City staff have recently completed streetcar studies which include updates to ridership, revenue, and cost estimates and the results were presented to City Council in October 2006.

City staff will be doing further design work and will look at the feasibility of staging streetcar construction in manageable

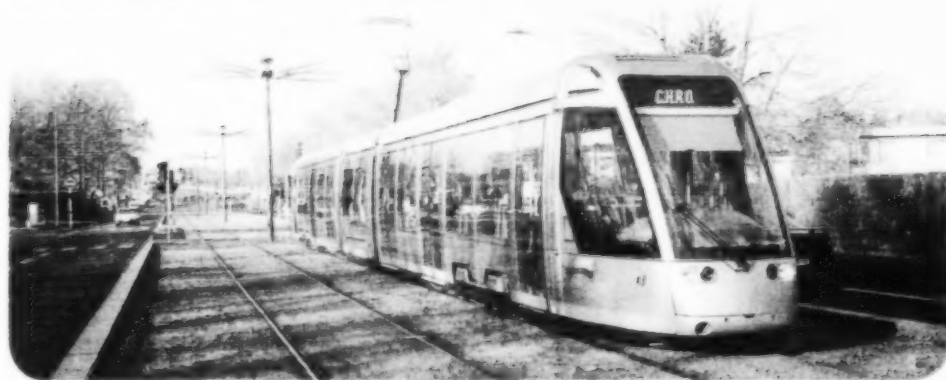
components. Depending on funding and logistics, the goal would be to have a demonstration line running between Granville Island and the Canada Line's Olympic Village Station by December 2009 as a sustainable transportation showcase project for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Several public meetings will be held later in the year to let you offer your feedback and suggestions on the overall concept and design details.

For more information:
vancouver.ca/streetcar



Streetcar systems in well-chosen corridors, such as this one in Orleans, France (below) can have significant environmental benefits. For Southeast False Creek, the Downtown Streetcar would reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle kms driven by 25-50 per cent.



BE IDLE FREE

Turn off
your engine.

After a six month education and awareness campaign, Vancouver's Idle

free Bylaw is now being enforced by the City. Parking enforcement staff are issuing tickets for any parked vehicles found idling for more than three minutes. Fines are \$50 (basic violation) or \$100 (heavy trucks and unattended vehicles). City Council enacted the Idle-free Bylaw in July 2006, with the goal of protecting our air quality, cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions, reducing urban noise and vehicle theft, and encouraging people to save fuel.

For more information: www.idlefree.ca

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES

In April, the Province of BC committed \$80 million to affordable housing in BC. The funding will allow 287 new supportive housing units to be built on three City-owned downtown sites and has enabled the Province to purchase 15 rental buildings. Ten of the 15 rental buildings are Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels located primarily in and around the Downtown Eastside. The purchase of the hotels means that 595 units of affordable housing will be protected.

Other recent City initiatives to protect affordable housing include recommendations to increase the fee paid by developers to convert or demolish single room accommodation units from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per unit and to limit the loss of older rental housing, and approval in principle of the innovative Vancouver Homelessness Funding Model authored by consultants Ken Dobell and Don Fairbairn. For more information, visit: vancouver.ca/housing



IN TOUCH WITH THE CITY

vancouver.ca/intouch.html

MULTILINGUAL PHONE LINES

For more information about the City in these languages, call:

資料查詢

604.871.6868

Hoi chi tiê

604.871.6969

ਸਾਹਵਾਰੀ ਲਏ

604.871.6565

Obtenga Información

604.871.6464

JUNE IS BIKE MONTH

Hop on your bike and celebrate Bike Month in June. There's no better time to start riding - warmer weather, traffic jams and construction delays, and high gas prices are just some of the incentives to use a bike. It's also great exercise and a good way to get around town and help the environment. There'll be lots of fun biking events throughout the city during Bike Month too.

Find out more at: onedayvancouver.ca

CITYNEWS

CITYNEWS is published twice a year with tax notices by the City's Communications Division at 604.873.7276 to update Vancouver residents on the many programs and services provided by the City. These services include: police, fire and rescue, libraries, parks and community centres, planning and land use, theatres, archives, garbage collection and recycling, water and sewer service, and transportation.

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Website: vancouver.ca

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